

## CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method of accessing data within an electronic system by a system external to the electronic system comprising the steps of:

- a. formatting a searchable database within the electronic system into a directory tree structure, wherein the directory tree structure includes nodes comprising related data and branches comprising links between the nodes, wherein each related item of data is categorized by a navigation path through the directory tree structure and by one or more parameters, wherein the parameters are specific to the node in which the related data is included; and
- b. accessing one or more nodes within the directory tree structure and obtaining data from the one or more nodes by utilizing an applications programming interface.

2. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the applications programming interface accesses the one or more nodes within the directory tree structure using a query string defining a navigation path through the directory tree structure to access a specific node within the directory tree structure.

3. The method as claimed in claim 2 wherein the related data is text, graphics, objects, links to other nodes within the directory tree structure, links to web sites external to the electronic system, or any combination thereof.

4. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the searchable database is distributed into more than one physical location.

5. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of accessing one or more nodes is performed by a server.
6. The method as claimed in claim 5 further comprising the step of establishing an internet connection with the server to access the one or more nodes.
7. The method as claimed in claim 6 wherein the internet connection is established with a computer system at a remote location from the server.
8. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of accessing one or more nodes is performed utilizing a selective one or more search methodologies including keyword search, hierarchical tree search, dichotomous key search, and parametric search.
9. A research system for providing access to a searchable database by a system external to the research system comprising:
  - a. means for formatting the searchable database into a directory tree structure, wherein the directory tree structure includes nodes comprising related data and branches comprising links between the nodes, wherein each related item of data is categorized by a navigation path through the directory tree structure and by one or more parameters, wherein the parameters are specific to the node in which the related data is included; and
  - b. means for accessing one or more nodes within the directory tree structure and obtaining data from the one or more nodes by utilizing an applications programming interface.
10. The research system as claimed in claim 9 wherein the applications programming interface accesses the one or more nodes within the directory tree structure using a query string defining a

navigation path through the directory tree structure to access a specific node within the directory tree structure.

11. The research system as claimed in claim 10 wherein the related data is text, graphics, objects, links to other nodes within the directory tree structure, links to web sites external to the electronic system, or any combination thereof.

12. The research system as claimed in claim 9 wherein the searchable database is distributed into more than one physical location.

13. The research system as claimed in claim 9 wherein the means for accessing one or more nodes is performed by a server.

14. The research system as claimed in claim 13 further comprising means for establishing an internet connection with the server to access the one or more nodes.

15. The research system as claimed in claim 14 wherein the internet connection is established with a computer system at a remote location from the server.

16. The research system as claimed in claim 9 wherein the means for accessing one or more nodes is performed utilizing a selective one or more search methodologies including keyword search, hierarchical search, dichotomous key search, and parametric search.

17. A research system for providing access to a searchable database by a system external to the research system comprising a research server configured to format the searchable database into a directory tree structure, wherein the directory tree structure includes nodes comprising related data and branches comprising links between the nodes, wherein each related item of data is categorized by a navigation path through the directory tree structure and by one or more

parameters, wherein the parameters are specific to the node in which the related data is included, and to access one or more nodes within the directory tree structure and to obtain data from the one or more nodes by utilizing an applications programming interface.

18. The research system as claimed in claim 17 wherein the applications programming interface utilizes a query string to communicate with the research server, wherein the query string defines a navigation path through the directory tree structure to access a specific node within the directory tree structure.

19. The research system as claimed in claim 18 wherein the related data is text, graphics, objects, links to other nodes within the directory tree structure, links to web sites external to the electronic system, or any combination thereof.

20. The research system as claimed in claim 17 wherein the searchable database is distributed into more than one physical location.

21. The research system as claimed in claim 20 further comprising an interface circuit coupled to the research server to establish a connection with a computer system.

22. The research system as claimed in claim 21 wherein the connection is established with the computer system at a remote location from the interface circuit.

23. The research system as claimed in claim 22 wherein the connection is established with the remote computer system and the interface circuit over the internet to allow users to access the one or more nodes and to obtain data from the one or more nodes.

24. The research system as claimed in claim 17 wherein the research server accesses the one or more nodes by utilizing a selective one or more search methodologies including keyword search, hierarchical search, dichotomous key search, and parametric search.

25. A network of devices for providing access to a searchable database by a system external to the research system comprising:

- a. one or more computer systems configured to establish a connection with other systems; and
- b. a research server coupled to the one or more computer systems to format the searchable database into a directory tree structure, wherein the directory tree structure includes nodes comprising related data and branches comprising links between the nodes, wherein each related item of data is categorized by a navigation path through the directory tree structure and by one or more parameters, wherein the parameters are specific to the node in which the related data is included, and to access one or more nodes within the directory tree structure and to obtain data from the one or more nodes by utilizing an applications programming interface.

26. The network of devices as claimed in claim 25 wherein the applications programming interface utilizes a query string to communicate with the research server, wherein the query string defines a navigation path through the directory tree structure to access a specific node within the directory tree structure.

27. The network of devices as claimed in claim 26 wherein the related data is text, graphics, objects, links to other nodes within the directory tree structure, links to web sites external to the electronic system, or any combination thereof.

28. The network of devices as claimed in claim 25 wherein the searchable database is distributed into more than one physical location.

29. The network of devices as claimed in claim 25 wherein the one or more computer systems and the research server are coupled together over the internet to allow users to access the one or more nodes and to obtain data from the one or more nodes.

30. The network of devices as claimed in claim 25 wherein the research server accesses the one or more nodes by utilizing a selective one or more search methodologies including keyword search, hierarchical search, dichotomous key search, and parametric search.

31. A method of accessing data within an electronic system by a system external to the electronic system comprising the steps of:

- a. formatting a searchable database within the electronic system into a directory tree structure, wherein the directory tree structure includes nodes comprising related data and branches comprising links between the nodes, wherein each related item of data is categorized by a navigation path through the directory tree structure and by one or more parameters, wherein the parameters are specific to the node in which the related data is included; and
- b. accessing one or more nodes within the directory tree structure and obtaining data from the one or more nodes by utilizing an applications programming interface, wherein the applications programming interface accesses the one or more nodes within the directory tree structure using a query string defining a navigation path through the directory tree structure to access a specific node within the directory tree structure.

32. A method of accessing data within an electronic system by a system external to the electronic system comprising the steps of:

- a. formatting a searchable database within the electronic system into a directory tree structure, wherein the directory tree structure includes nodes comprising related data and branches comprising links between the nodes, wherein each related item of data is categorized by a navigation path through the directory tree structure and by one or more parameters, wherein the parameters are specific to the node in which the related data is included; and
- b. accessing one or more nodes within the directory tree structure and obtaining data from the one or more nodes by utilizing an applications programming interface, wherein accessing one or more nodes is performed utilizing a selective one or more search methodologies including keyword search, hierarchical search, dichotomous key search, and parametric search..